

Dry Spell Excerpt

The night's fresh and mild air complemented the full moon, casting an amazing luminosity across the beach. She opened the back patio door, and let the cool breeze caress her face.

The scent of the sea filled her sinuses. A perfect night for a stroll. She slipped off her shoes, and walked down the stairs.

The sugary sand massaged her toes out to the surf, each wave softly hugging the shoreline in a rhythmic melody. The absence of people on the beach made everything more peaceful. In the dim moonlight, a few dolphin fins emerged from the water in the distance. A sliver of deep orange from the sunset still lingered like a thumbnail poking up from the horizon. She stood for several moments, inhaling the fresh air, taking in nature's beauty.

Sam dared a glance at Chase's house, through her peripheral vision. All dark.

He's probably at Breakwater. What does he do for a living anyway? There was no way tending bar part-time could pay the bills on that glorious beach house.

Continuing her walk, the warm breeze blew between her legs, and furled her new dress up around her thighs. She loved the silky feeling on her skin.

The water's surface was smooth tonight. She reached down, grabbed a shell, and rubbed the wet sand off between her fingers.

Memories of her trips to the shore with her parents filled her mind. Her father could skip a shell across the water with five bounces. Her attempts never made more than two.

Sam chucked it across the water, and it sank on the first hit. A laugh bubbled up from her stomach. She tried again with another shell, and it skipped only once.

"Try turning the other way."

She jumped at the familiar voice.

Chase stood behind her in a loose ice-blue T-shirt, and the same pair of cargo shorts she'd come to associate with him. His hair ruffled in the wind, and he'd never looked more comfortable. More dashing. More enticing.

"You snuck up on me."

"I called your name." He smiled.

"Didn't hear it."

"Try it the other way. Like a frisbee." He took a step closer.

Her cheeks warmed. She picked up another shell, and tried it. Straight into the water.

He chuckled again. "Takes practice."

Her lips curled at the corners. "Hmm."

"What's your full name?"

The question surprised her, but she didn't let it show. "Samantha Callahan."

He nodded. "Samantha. I like it."

Her name passing over his lips sank into her core like smooth, warm chocolate. Her mouth watered. *Better than dessert.*

He made no attempt to hide his perusal of her from head to toe. "Nice dress. Is it new?"

She nodded.

“Vacation agrees with you, Samantha,” he said with a grin. “I see you’re still having trouble letting your hair down.”

She lifted her hand and stroked down the back of her hair. “I only clipped it back to keep it off my face.”

WHEN CHASE HAD walked out to his back deck that night, he surmised from the absolute quiet that the girls had gone out to dinner. He had to grin when he heard them return. The whole street heard them, from their obvious inebriation. They’d raved about lobsters, and he’d chuckled.

Nearly finished with his favorite IPA, he watched Sam stroll onto the beach and absorb the final moments of another glorious sunset. Beach life at its best.

Sam hadn’t seemed to notice him, but damn, he noticed her. That white dress she wore looked soft and feminine. It hung loosely, but also showed off her curves. The back had some kind of wide-lace crochet straps that crossed over smooth, sun-kissed skin.

Damn!

He stepped closer, subtly shaking his head. “Uh-uh. All the way down. Let me try.”

Chase knew to tread lightly. The way she’d raced from his house the prior day rang in his head.

From his experience, women who let themselves get so tightly wound—feeling responsible for everything and needing control—struggled with trusting a man to take charge, and at least for a moment, take the helm. But this wasn’t about control, or claiming. This was about showing her life was worth enjoying. Taking pleasure in each other’s willingness.

Her eyes widened. After a beat, she raised her chin, and met his stare, an irresistible dare in her sparkling blue eyes. “Okay, you do it.”

He held back his smile, thrilled by the challenge. He moved closer—close enough to smell her light floral fragrance. He reached behind her head, and found two pins, pulling them gently. Her hair tumbled down her back, and unfurled over her shoulders.

“There you are. Nice to meet you, Samantha.”

He moved closer, caressing his fingers through her long silky hair, massaging her scalp.

Her eyelids fluttered, as if resisting closing entirely.

“Your hair is beautiful. Close your eyes. I won’t hurt you.”

She trusted his words, and complied.

His fingers caressed her skin, continuing his ministrations through her hair, when her head rested back into his hands. He bent down close to her ear and whispered, “You look even more beautiful when relaxed.”

She sighed.

He gently kissed the sweet spot just beneath her ear.